Topic:

Collective Spaces along the "Nalas" of Karachi - From Sewerage Drains to Sustainable Settlements

A research through design exploring sustainable public spaces and walkability along the sewerage drains of Karachi.

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Name of the Publication:

9th MURP Proceedings, "HOUSING for ALL", Department of Architecture and Planning, NEDUET, Karachi

Held 29th March 2014

Abstract

Urbanization in Pakistan meant its cities, undergoing unplanned; physical, social, economic and ecological changes. Government's attempts at planning were geared towards developing isolated projects for employment, housing and mobility related infrastructure developments, ignoring comprehensive humane planning including; sectors like, ecology, heritage, culture and social transformations.

In Karachi and other cities of Pakistan, urban communities housing millions grew alongside the sewerage "nalas" (originally rain water drains) adding to urban sprawl, long transport routes, ghettoization, inner city heritage disintegration and socio- cultural divide.

Nalas, the natural lungs of any area, over time became; open, semi covered or covered sewerage laden back waters in the cities where all sorts of residential, commercial and industrial encroachments sprung up while the richer parts of the city turned their backs to it and while dumping their own waste into it as well.

The standard government response has been to ignore the productive landscape value of these informal mixed land use housing corridors bordering the nalas, terming them as encroachments which lead to and get affected by annual rain related floods

This paper based on a research undertaken on the Nala's in Karachi, advocates the need for utilizing the potential role of the nalas in Karachi as a city wide non-vehicular mobility network which will lead to a cleaning up of the sewerage, connect its bordering formal and informal housing corridors to public open spaces, reconnecting and recreating the lost ecological, recreational, social and cultural balance in the city.

Due to their topography, city wide inter connectivity and availability of open (unplanned) land, the nala network appears to be an appropriate choice for developing a green connectivity scheme bridging the current housing, transport and social divides in the city. This scheme will require the much needed sewerage water disposal and recycling by the city and can be used as an incentive for solid waste management, land use up gradation and the emergence of a new popular identity for the city which is affordable, citizen friendly and sustainable.